

CONCLUSION

The genus *Tesia* consists of 5 species: *castaneocoronata*, *olivea*, *cyaniventer*, *superciliaris* and *everetti*, characterised by very short tails, loud staccato songs in the 1–3 KHz range, long legs, with which they often move through the undergrowth in a curious sidewise motion. The genus *Urosphena* consists of 3 species: *squamiceps*, *whiteheadi* and *subulata*, characterised by very short tails, high-pitched, barely audible monotonous songs in the 8–10 KHz range, and by spending most of their time on the ground. *Cettia pallidipes* is clearly a member of *Cettia* rather than of *Urosphena*.

Acknowledgements

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The status of the Rufous-chested Dotterel *Zonibyx modestus* in the Falkland Islands

by D. N. Carstairs

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Introduction

The Rufous-chested Dotterel (or Winter Plover) *Zonibyx modestus* is found throughout the Falkland Islands during the austral spring and summer—from the beginning of August until the end of January. Conspicuous in plumage and behaviour, it occurs across a wide range of habitats, from coastal mudflats to hilly plateaux up to c. 700 m a.s.l. It breeds commonly amongst the dry heaths (locally called 'hard camp') of extensive sheep-grazed moorland characterised by an admixture of white

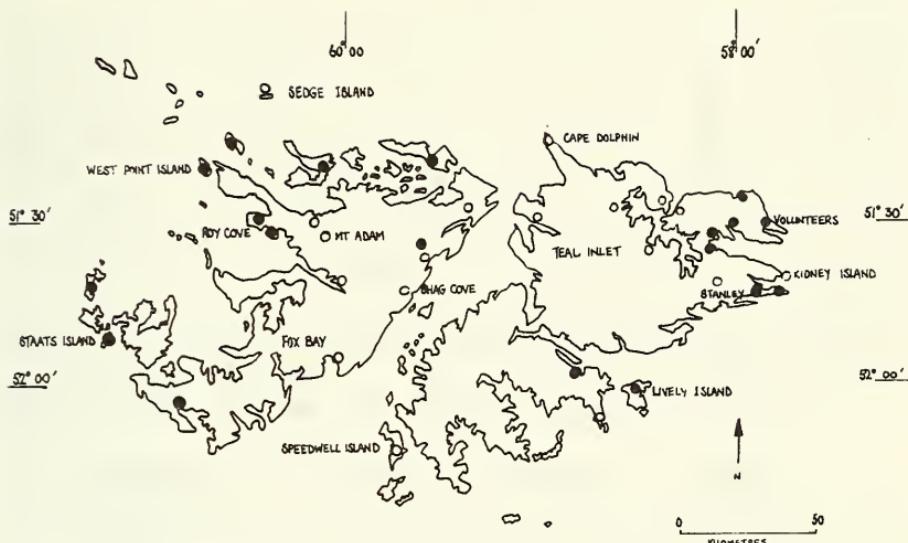


Figure 1. Falkland Islands showing principal areas visited ○ and Rufous-chested Dotterel *Zonibyx modestus* locations ● 1972–1974.

grass (*Cortaderia* sp.), ferns and the heath-like shrub, Diddle Dee *Empetrum rubrum*.

On the South American continent, the species breeds in the west along the sea-board of Chile, ranging for over 3000 km from 40°S to Cape Horn, 56°S; and in Argentina in the east, in Tierra del Fuego and the Magellanic Islands, moving northwards in winter to Uruguay and, rarely, as far as Sao Paulo, Brazil (23°S). In the west, the wintering range extends from Valdivia (40°S) to Atacama (24°S) (Meyer de Schauensee 1971).

In the Falkland Islands, over 500 km east of mainland South America, there has always been some conjecture about the status of *Z. modestus*. Abbott (1861) was certain enough to consider it "a migratory bird in East Falkland" and further believed that birds "disappeared entirely" by the end of April each year. Bennett (1926) was less certain, and while agreeing that it was a "common summer migrant and breeding", he considered that "a few remain throughout the winter". This view was shared by Cawkell & Hamilton (1961), citing pre-migratory build ups on west Falkland and visible migration over Stanley in East Falkland. Pettingill (1960) however, thought it unlikely that this species (or any other) regularly left the Falklands against the strong prevailing westerly winds. Woods (1975) believed that more birds were present during the winter than had been thought but that their dowdier plumage and inconspicuous behaviour at that time made them more difficult to see.

Fieldwork

I was resident in the Falkland Islands from January 1972 to December 1974, during which time I made 369 field trips throughout the countryside (Fig. 1), covering 23 settlements and surrounding areas, 5 outside

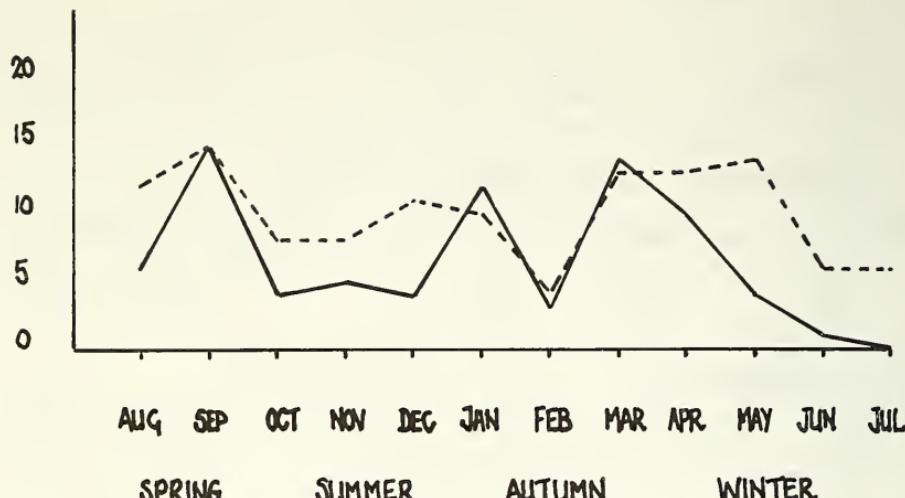


Figure 2. Total number of rufous chested dotterel *Zonibyx modestus* records/month – in relation to the mean number of field days/month. Falkland Islands 1972–1974 inc.

houses (shepherds' accommodation remote from settlements) and uninhabited localities noted for their wildlife, including Volunteers, Seal Bay (Port Louis settlement), Kidney and Staats Islands, Cape Dolphin and Elephant Beach. Hinterland moorland, including plateaux ground of Mount Adam, Mount Maria, Mount Kent and the Two Sisters, were visited on foot, while many other journeys were made between settlements on horse-back.

During the 3-year period, Rufous-chested Dotterels were recorded on 78 occasions, occurring in every month except July. Observer effort was reasonably constant throughout the recording period, though there was a natural tendency to spend less time in the field during the more inclement winter months (Fig. 2).

Taking the southern seasons in sequence, dotterels were first recorded in significant numbers at the end of August, their first appearance each year showing some synchrony: 10 on 25 August 1972, 3 on 26 August 1973, 30 on 7 September 1974 (Fig. 3). Numbers of records and size of flocks increased rapidly, peaking around early September (week 35), with flocks of up to 100 birds present. There then followed a rapid decline in flock size as birds paired and dispersed widely prior to breeding. By the third week in November (week 46) young were present. Towards the end of January mixed parties of juveniles and adults began to flock, often in association with Two-banded Plovers *Charadrius falklandicus* and White-rumped Sandpipers *Calidris fuscicollis*. Flocks occurred in both East and West Falkland at this time, peaking around the end of March (week 12). By late April (week 16) few birds remained, a situation which prevailed throughout the Southern winter. During 77 field trips in May, June and July of the 3 years, Rufous-chested Dotterels were recorded on only 5 occasions: 4 times in May, once in June and not at all in July. Only 2 winter records involved more than 5 birds: 20 at Volunteers, East

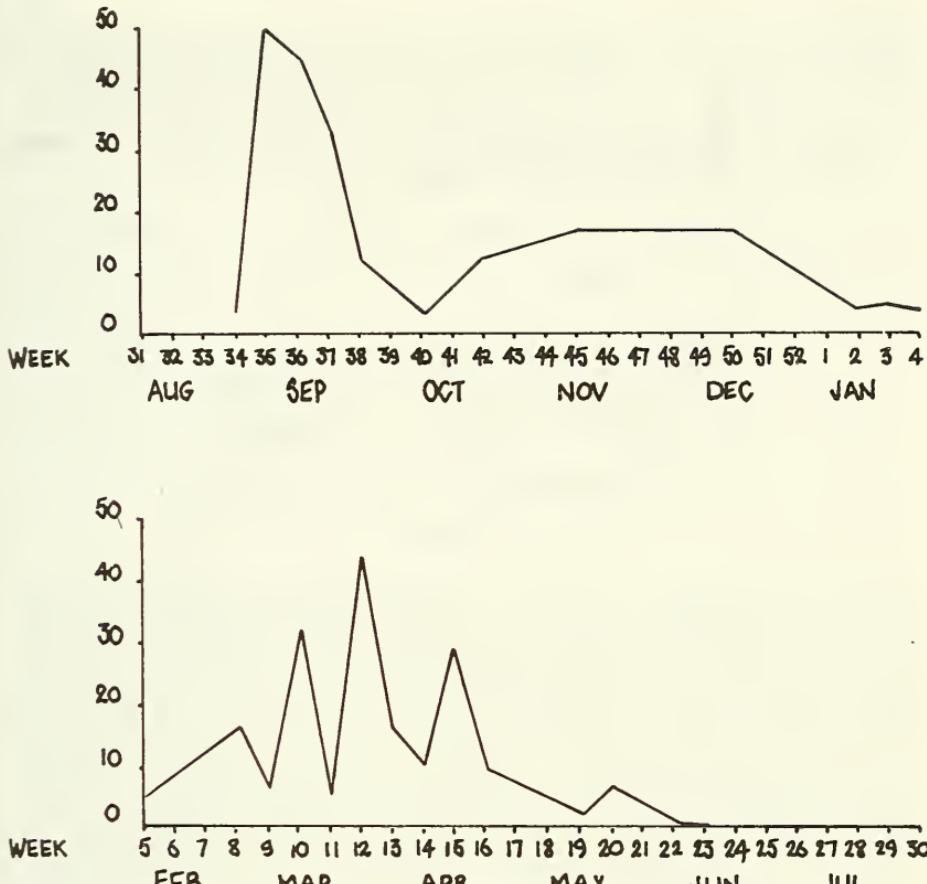


Figure 3. Mean number of rufous-chested *Zonibyx modestus* dotterels recorded by weeks (consecutive 7 day periods) 1972–1974 in the Falkland Islands.

Falkland on 20 May 1972 and 9 at West Point Island, West Falkland on 9 May 1973.

Conclusion

The appearance of flocks at about the same time each year in Aug/Sep, the rapid build up of flocks in March/April and disappearance by May, together with the paucity of records from May to July and in early August, suggest that a big majority of Rufous-chested Dotterels occurring in the Falkland Islands are migratory. Furthermore, in agreement with Woods (1975) and earlier authors, small flocks or individuals undoubtedly remain in isolated localities on both East and West Falkland.

Acknowledgements

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The Bahama Swallow *Tachycineta cyaneoviridis*; a summary

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The Bahama Swallow *Tachycineta cyaneoviridis* is a little-known hirundinine which, except for a few apparently irregular appearances in Florida and Cuba, is endemic to the Bahama Islands. Until recently it was placed in the monotypic genus *Callichelidon* (Bond 1967, AOU 1983). Very little about its natural history or biology has been published. Our purpose is to bring together the most significant literature of the species and to add our own observations made during visits to the islands of Abaco 20–22 Jun 1986, Grand Bahama 28–30 Nov 1986, New Providence 23 Jun 1986 and 19 May 1988, Bimini 19 Sep 1987 and Andros 20–23 May 1988 (Fig. 1). PWS has also examined most of the known specimens of the Bahama Swallow (Table 1), namely those currently deposited in the British Museum (Natural History), Tring (BMNH), Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Massachusetts (MCZ), American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia (ANSP), U.S. National Museum of Natural History (USNM), Tall Timbers Research Station, Tallahassee, Florida (TTRS), Louisiana State University Museum of Zoology (LSUMZ) and the Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago (FMNH); he has not been able to examine those deposited at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh (CMNH) or elsewhere.

SPECIMEN RECORD AND HISTORY

The specimen record of the Bahama Swallow closely parallels the ornithological exploration of the Bahama Islands. The species was described by Henry Bryant, the first collecting ornithologist to visit the Bahamas, who secured 7 in April 1859 (Table 1). Charles Cory obtained another series in June 1879, of which at least 14 specimens, including 4 juveniles, are extant (Table 1). One of Cory's juveniles, deposited in the BMNH in 1885 and from the Salvin-Godman collection, became the basis for the only description of the immature of the species ever written (Sharpe